

Mr. McCAIN. I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to address the Senate on the pending nominations before the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF NOAH BRYSON MAMET TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC

NOMINATION OF COLLEEN BRADLEY BELL TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO HUNGARY

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nominations of Noah Bryson Mamet, of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Argentine Republic; and Colleen Bradley Bell, of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Hungary.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

BELL NOMINATION

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I don't usually object to the appointments and nominations by the administration to various ambassadorial positions around the world. I also understand there are numbers of political supporters, financial supporters, and that this is characteristic of Republican and Democratic administrations alike. It has never disturbed me when I have observed nominees to a Caribbean country or maybe to London or Paris or Berlin being rewarded for support both financial and otherwise. But now we are at a point where, according to the Washington Post, modern Presidents have generally followed a 70-30 rule on ambassadorial appointments—where 70 percent are career foreign service and 30 percent are political appointees. President Obama has defied this historic bipartisan political practice, and in his second term a shocking 53 percent of ambassadorial nominees have been political. This brings his 2-term average to 37—far more than any administration in the past. What is very interesting is that some of these nominees are in very sensitive positions

around the world. The nomination of Ms. Colleen Bell is probably the most egregious example of that.

Hungary is a close ally—in many respects—but there is no doubt that since taking office in 2010 the Hungarian Prime Minister, Mr. Viktor Orban, has centralized power, has faced scrutiny due to actions that critics charge are inconsistent with democratic principles and practices. His government has reduced the independence of Hungary's courts, pushed through controversial changes to the constitution, and placed acute restrictions on non-governmental organizations. In other words, this is a very important country. This is a very important country where bad things are going on.

Ms. Bell's experiences have been largely relegated to producing the television soap opera "The Bold and the Beautiful." Now, I am sure television viewing is important in Hungary, but the fact is this nominee is totally unqualified for this position in this country.

Now, if it were, as I say, some Caribbean country or some other, I would understand that. But here we are in a relationship with a country where, according to Bloomberg News, "Orban says he seeks to end liberal democracy in Hungary. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said he wants to abandon liberal democracy in favor of an 'illiberal state,' citing Russia and Turkey as examples."

By the way, we have an excellent DCM there in Hungary who has been doing a great job.

Ms. Bell has two qualifications. One is she is a producer of a television soap opera. She has no experience in foreign policy or national security, no familiarity with the language, country, or the region, has never been there, and lacks meaningful knowledge of history or economics. Her only significant qualification is that she bundled, as the word is used, \$800,000 to President Obama in the last election, and as part of the California delegation to the 2012 Democratic convention, she bundled more than \$2.1 million for President Obama's reelection effort.

I want to repeat again that I understand there are awards for political support and it has grown with "bundling." But when we send a person who doesn't know the language—has never been to the country, has no familiarity in foreign policy or national security—to a nation of this importance, then, my friends, we are making a serious mistake.

The Hungarian Prime Minister is distancing himself from the values shared by most European Union nations. Orban said civil society organizers receiving funding from abroad needed to be "monitored," as he considered those to be agents of foreign powers. We are talking about the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, Freedom House, and others.

He said:

We're not dealing with civil society members but paid political activists who are trying to help foreign interests here.

Amazing. Orban, who has fueled employment with public works projects, said he wants to replace welfare societies with a welfare state. But the main problem is that Mr. Orban is cozying up to Vladimir Putin. He has now entered into a nuclear deal, and he is practicing the same kinds of anti-democratic practices as what seems to be his role model—Vladimir Putin.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a letter to Mr. REID from the 15 former presidents of the American Foreign Service Association be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

MARCH 6, 2014.

DEAR SENATOR REID, Among the nominees for ambassadorships currently under consideration by the Senate, three have generated considerable public controversy: George Tsunis (Norway), Colleen Bell (Hungary), and Noah Mamet (Argentina). The nominations of Mr. Tsunis and Ms. Bell have been forwarded to the full Senate by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

As former presidents of the American Foreign Service Association, the professional association and trade union of career members of the Foreign Service, we urge you to oppose granting Senate consent to these three candidates. Although we have no reason to doubt that the nominees are conscientious and worthy Americans, the fact that they appear to have been chosen on the basis of their service in raising money for electoral campaigns, with minimal demonstrated qualifications for their posts, has subjected them to widespread public ridicule, not only in the U.S. but also abroad. As a result, their effectiveness as U.S. representatives in their host countries would be severely impaired from the start. Their nominations also convey a disrespectful message, that relations with the host country are not significant enough to demand a chief of mission with relevant expertise.

These three nominations represent a continuation of an increasingly unsavory and unwise practice by both parties. In the words of President Theodore Roosevelt, "The spoils or patronage theory is that public office is primarily designed for partisan plunder." Sadly it has persisted, even after President Nixon's acknowledged rewarding of ambassadorial nominations to major campaign donors was exposed. Recognizing that the practice was inconsistent with democratic principles, the U.S. Congress in the Foreign Service Act of 1980 set the following guidelines:

SEC. 304. APPOINTMENT OF CHIEFS OF MISSION.—

(a)(1)An individual appointed or assigned to be a chief of mission should possess clearly demonstrated competence to perform the duties of a chief of mission, including, to the maximum extent practicable, a useful knowledge of the principal language or dialect of the country in which the individual is to serve, and knowledge and understanding of the history, the culture, the economic and political institutions, and the interests of that country and its people.

(2) Given the qualifications specified in paragraph (1), positions as chief of mission should normally be accorded to career members of the Service, though circumstances will warrant appointments from time to time of qualified individuals who are not career members of the Service.